

**REMARKS OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM PERRY
HEROES OF REINVENTION "HAMMER" AWARD CEREMONY
SEPTEMBER 20, 1996**

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was sentenced to spend all of eternity rolling a large rock up a mountain;

Only to have it roll back down just as he reached the top.

When it comes to acquisition reform, every Secretary of Defense for the past 20-30 years has been like Sisyphus.

Each one was determined to get that rock over the mountain and reform the system;

And each time, that rock has rolled back down.

But in the past three years, we have gotten that rock of acquisition reform rolling;

Because instead of trying to roll it up the mountain, we got rid of the mountain.

We did this in several ways.

We turned the MilSpec system upside down, making them the exception, not the rule.

We convinced Congress to give us the legislation that enabled us to overhaul the system.

Behind us, we had the support and inspiration of two individuals who can truly move mountains:

President Clinton and Vice President Gore, who made defense acquisition reform a national priority.

Most importantly, we tapped the talent and the creativity of our acquisition work force.

You grabbed your picks and shovels and put your shoulders to the task.

As we eliminated the mountain, I concentrated on getting a team in place to keep the acquisition reform effort rolling.

I looked for leaders with three crucial skills:

They had to be experienced so they could hit the deck running -- we didn't have time for on-the-job training.

They said that to change our acquisition system, we needed to change the culture;

And to change the culture, we had to get rid of half of the work force, which was used to doing things the old way.

We took the opposite approach.

Instead of getting rid of the people with the day-to-day experience, we asked you to be the agents of change.

You were the ones who were frustrated with the red tape.

You were the ones who knew what needed to be changed.

And you are the ones who proved the skeptics wrong.

You put the work into the working groups, and the action into the process action teams.

And today, you are the ones we honor not only for changing our acquisition system;

But also for proving that when federal employees are given free rein to change government, they will move mountains.

Winston Churchill once said: "I am easily satisfied with the very best."

You have done the very best, and I am more than satisfied.

I am proud of each of you, and proud to present you with the Vice President's Hammer Award.
